

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of:

JOHN M. TIESLER

Serial No.: 10/710,897

Filed: August 11, 2004

For: MODULAR BIN POWERSTRIP ASSEMBLY FOR A VEHICLE

Attorney Docket No.: 04966 (LC 0163 PUS)

Group Art Unit: 2833

Examiner: Felix O. Figueroa

**REPLY BRIEF UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 41.41
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a)**

Mail Stop Appeal Brief - Patents
Commissioner for Patents
U.S. Patent & Trademark Office
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Applicants hereby petition for a one month extension of time to respond to the Office Action mailed April 17, 2009, thereby extending the time period within which to respond to July 17, 2009.

This Reply Brief is in response to the Examiner's Answer mailed on April 17, 2009 for the above-identified patent application.

Applicants maintain the arguments stated in the Appeal Brief and further clarify some of these arguments below.

As set forth in the Appeal Brief, the present invention is directed to a vehicle overhead module powerstrip assembly 20¹ comprising an overhead attachment strip 40 coupled to a vehicle overhead structure 28 (Figure 3). The attachment strip 40 includes a T-shaped main center member 52 (see Figure 8) having a T-body 53 and a T-cap 55. An electrically conductive strip 60 is coupled to the attachment strip 40 and comprises a powerstrip 57 positioned on the T-body 53 and a ground strip 64 (Figure 7) positioned on the T-cap 53. The present invention further includes a plurality of modular connectors 48 each of which comprises a plurality of electrical contacts 46 having a plurality of attachment positions along an electrically conductive strip 60. The modular connectors 48 (Figure 8) are removable from the electrically conductive strip 60 and are interchangeable in position, and are configured to couple the overhead electronic module 16 (Figure 2) to the electrically conductive strip 60. A flange 54 covers at least a portion of the electrically conductive strip 60 (Figure 8) and is flexible and flexes outward when the plurality of modular connectors 48 are removed to at least partially cover and prevent access to the conductive strip.

The configuration of the T-shaped main center member 52 (Figure 8) houses a powerstrip 57 on the protected inside, a ground strip 64 on the exposed outside and an flexible cover (flange) 54 that protects the powerstrip when the removable modules 48 are removed is a unique and novel structure. The flange 54 allows the modules 48 to be simply and easily installed and removed by retaining connections and mounting through pressure on the electrical contacts trapped against the T-shaped main center member 52. Furthermore, the ground strip 64 positioning allows the ground contact to be used with spring characteristics such that sliding of the modules 48 is further enabled.

The Patent Office states that *Dutta* discloses substantially the claimed invention except for the specific configuration of the attachment strip. Acknowledging that *Dutta* does not disclose the specific configuration of the attachment strip, the Patent Office looks to

¹ References herein are provided to help illustrate non-limiting embodiments.

Marmaropoulos to cure the deficiency. Applicants do not believe that the rejections based on the combination of *Dutta* and *Marmaropoulos* is appropriate as it would not be obvious to combine the two references in the manner suggested by the Patent Office, and even if they were combined, relevant claim limitations would still not be disclosed, taught or suggested by the resulting combination.

To being with, it should be noted that *Dutta* does not disclose a flexible flange that covers at least a portion of the at least one electrically conductive strip. As recited in [0031] of the application, the flange is deflectable and applies pressure on the vertical electrical contacts 46 of modular connector 48. *Dutta* does not have this type of arrangement and thus would not be concerned with providing a flexible flange that covers at least a portion of at least one electrically conductive strip.

Furthermore, the Patent Office states that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use an attachment strip including a T-shaped member and at least one flexible flange, as taught by *Marmaropoulos*, to enclose-seal the conductive member. As *Dutta* has an entirely different mechanical and electrical connection than that of the present invention, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Patent Office's assertion. Moreover, *Marmaropoulos* does not appear to teach the claimed configuration of the attachment strip. *Marmaropoulos* is directed to a mechanism for electrically connecting various electronic devices to an article of clothing, such as shirts, pants, shoes, hats or coats. (Column 2, lines 40-53). While the Patent Office states that 50 discloses a ground, and thus meets the claimed limitation, it appears that though the ground 150 is not disclosed on any T-cap of *Marmaropoulos*.

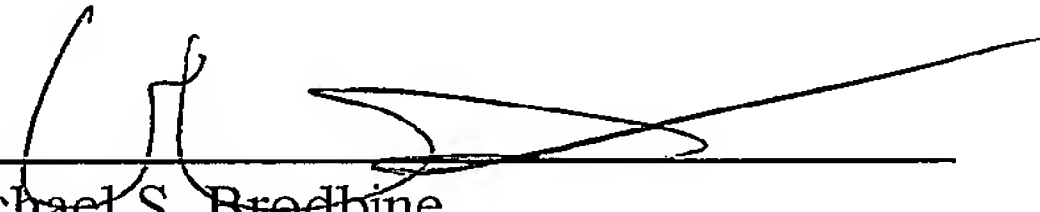
Accordingly, Applicants do not believe that the rejections based on the combination of *Dutta* and *Marmaropoulos* is appropriate as it would not be obvious to combine the two references in the manner suggested by the Patent Office, and even if they were combined, relevant claim limitations would still not be disclosed, taught or suggested by the resulting combination.

For the reasons given in the Appeal Brief and this Reply Brief, Applicants maintain that this invention is patentable.

The Petition fee of \$130 is being charged to Deposit Account No. 02-3978 via electronic authorization submitted concurrently herewith. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments as a result of the filing of this paper to Deposit Account No. 02-3978.

Respectfully submitted,

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